The Effect of Colligational Corpus-based Instruction on Enhancing the Pragmalinguistic Knowledge of Request Speech Act among Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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Abstract
This study investigated the effectiveness of colligational corpus-based instruction on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The objective of the study was to find out whether or not providing students with corpora through using colligational instruction had any significant effects on enhancing their pragmalinguistic knowledge and, hence, speech act learning. Sixty participants from several institutes in Mazandaran Province, Iran, participated in the study. They were all intermediate-level students, and were divided into two homogeneous groups (30 each) of experimental and control groups based on the OPT results. A multiple discourse completion test was then administered to both groups as the pretest to measure their ability and knowledge in using the speech act of request. Subsequently, the treatment started where the experimental group received corpus-based instruction through colligational practices, while the control group practiced learning the same speech act through traditional or common methods of learning speech acts (i.e., using textbooks, audios, and videos). After 15 sessions of training, a posttest of multiple discourse completion test was administered. The data were analyzed using paired- and independent-samples *t* tests. In order to increase the validity of the results, the researchers observed and interviewed all the participants, too. The results that learning of the speech act of request improved significantly better through corpus-based instruction vis-à-vis traditional method of teaching colligations.

Keywords: Colligation, corpus-based instruction, speech acts, pragmalinguistic knowledge, Multiple Discourse Completion Test.

Introduction

In recent years, English as an international language has emerged as a mean of communication between speakers of different languages and this made English teaching increasingly important in non-English speaking countries. At the same time, teachers of English as a foreign language are trying to improve English learners' language competence comprehensively to communicate with English speakers effectively based on polite and proper verbal exchanges. However, despite being able to speak English fluently in these contexts, there is often a pragmatic dissidence in various speech acts that may reduce the communicative intent (Cortazzi & Jin, 2008; Goh & Kwah, 1997; Rao, 1996, 2002). One of the important aspects of pragmatics that is widely problematic in this case is the realm of speech acts. In other words, a good-willed speech act in one culture may be considered ill-mannered in another culture, and a potential consequential result of misunderstanding or breakdown of an intercultural conversation always exists that may even cause offence to the other side. Cohen (2008) considers speech acts

to be an important part of pragmatics due to the possible misfit between what is said and what is meant. It is believed that successful speech act realization involves both sociocultural /sociolinguistic abilities (Cohen, 1996) and pragmalinguistic /sociopragmatics aspects (Thomas , 1983). That is, the speech act use is regarded appropriate if it is expressed by appropriate linguistic forms (Cohen, 1996). Leech (1983) distinguishes between two components of general pragmatics. First, he defines socio-pragmatics as the sociological interface of pragmatics which focuses on the language use in social situations, the social setting of language use, and it includes variables such as cultural context, social status, or social distance of speakers. Second, pragmalinguistics, that is the linguistic end of pragmatics, considering the particular linguistic resources which a special language provides for conveying particular illocutions, i.e. the range of structural resources from which speakers can choose when they are using language.

Although having siociopragmatic knowledge of speech acts is necessary both in theory and practice, but it is not enough. Studies show that increasing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts can be very influential in EFL settings, too. Learning grammar in context will allow learners to see how rules can be used in sentences. Although language is context-sensitive and in the absence of context, it is very difficult to recover the intended meaning of a single word or phrase (Thornbury, 1999), pragmalinguistic is part of pragmatics knowledge that focuses on the role of grammar in the context of use. Callies (2009) draws attention to the pragmalinguistic component of pragmatics and its interplay with grammar at the same time. He examined advanced L2 learners' comprehension and use of constructions that were the pragmatically-motivated variations of basic word orders. He outlined that the knowledge of the principles of information organization in discourse, and the use of linguistic devices for those information are two important components of pragmatic knowledge. Callies (2009) suggests that further research into L2 learners' abilities at the syntax-pragmatics interface may also be a rewarding enterprise with respect to the interplay of grammatical and pragmalinguistic knowledge that is an important yet unresolved issue in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Dippold (2009) also noted that interlanguage pragmatics not only prioritizes research on the expression of L2 politeness and the acquisition of politeness strategies, but that it also does so in a decontextualized manner that takes little account of the situations of linguistic discourse. She argued that interlanguage pragmatics should move toward pragmalinguistics (2011). But there are some issues concerning these problems that are worth mentioning. The way pragmalinguistics is taught is also important because these lexico-grammatical chunks do not belong to any linguistic category on tree diagrams and providing grammatical explanations cannot be a good way for teaching them (Stefanowitsch & Gries, 2011). Another important issue concerning this topic is the role of instructional materials. Traditional approaches and materials are not responsive of the huge and vast diversities of the pragmatic knowledge in different learning contexts. According to Boxer and Pickering (1995), data in most of the materials such as textbooks depends on the authors' intuitions about speech act realization, which are found to be greatly different from the natural or actual speech behavior and which are inadequate in providing the important information or metapragmatic explanation about the underlying social strategies of speech acts. For this reason, corpora and concordancing programs have been used by second language learners and teachers in classroom exercises. These exercises include building vocabulary and exploring grammatical and discourse features of texts (Kennedy & Miceli, 2001). Stefanowitsch and Gries (2011) added new ideas to what is said and suggested teaching the standard grammar structures. They believed the learner gradually acquires the rest of what native speakers know over time through continued exposure. Textbooks and other traditional pedagogical materials cannot provide such a vast

source of exposure. But corpora can provide this situation through collocation, colligation, and colloconstruction.

Colligation as a corpus-based approach to grammar is based on the notion first introduced by Firth (1968) and refers to the relations between grammatical categories. In corpus linguistics, the term typically refers to the co-occurrence of words with particular grammatical categories (Hoey, 2000). It is typically operationalized in terms of word classes occurring in a particular position relative to a node word. It is in fact collocation at the level of part-of-speech. Hoey's notion of colligation is broad enough to include many studies of lexico-grammatical phenomena. Mair (2003) worked on gerundial and infinitival complements after *begin* and *start* and on infinitival complementation in general (Mair, 1990). Noel (2003) worked on infinitives, accusatives and that- clauses and the results of these studies support the usefulness of using colligation for enhancing the quality of learning lexico-gramatical aspects of language.

The present study was intended to investigate whether or not using on-line corpora and practicing pragmalinguistic aspects of speech act of request through corpus-based colligations, as an alternative to the traditional teaching approaches, can solve the problems concerning learning this speech act. Thus, the following research question was addressed:

Q. Does colligational corpus-based instruction have any significant effect on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of the speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

Review of Literature

Interlanguage Pragmatics theory has predominantly been concerned with speech act theory, speech act types such as requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, compliments and compliment responses, and the use of internal and external modification to these speech acts (Austin, 1975). The importance of this theory for the understanding of language is widely recognized. It was the philosopher Austin (1975) who first proposed making a distinction between utterances that could be verified and were therefore cognitively meaningful according to the definition imposed by logical positivism, and those utterances that may be perceived as performing some kind of linguistic 'act'. The concerns about the ambiguity and verifiability of language that was raised by logical positivism made Austin develop his theory of speech acts. Among different types of speech acts, the speech act of requesting has been one of the most widely examined features in the interlanguage pragmatics field. Specifically, a request consists of an illocutionary act in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action which is for the benefit of the speaker (Trosborg, 1995; Sifianou, 1999). Therefore, this speech act has been regarded as one of the most threatening speech acts, since it intrinsically threatens the hearer's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Learners still have problems in correct use of this act and the textbooks are not responsive of the diversities of this specific speech act. Because of the methodological problems on the one hand and scarcity of the recourses and materials in traditional text-book based methods on the other hand, online corpora using colligation as a grammatical model has been rewarding in recent years.

Polcz (2012) did a corpus-based colligational study on conventionally indirect speech acts in English–Hungarian film script translation. Two pragmalinguistic forms were chosen for the purposes of the research: suggestion and request. The pragmalinguistic analysis focused on the question of whether a given surface form is suited to express the same conventionally indirect speech act in the source and the target languages, and what differences can be shown between source and target language speech acts in the category of indirectness/directness and linguistic politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987). Linguistic data were obtained from the source and the

target language corpora. The source language corpus comprised the scripts of 711 episodes of 20 American TV series in computer: processable digital format amounting to 497 hours of film materials. A wide range of different genres were included in the corpus, such as comedies, crime series, hospital series, family drama, teenage and fantasy series. A total number of 200 pieces of data were obtained from each surface form amounting to 1000 pieces of linguistic data altogether. The result showed that both direct and indirect transfer took place in the process of translation of speech acts. Changing the directness category was motivated firstly by the source language specificity of the pragmalinguistic form, and secondly by the sociopragmatic variables. The phenomenon of negative and positive transfer were identified and described to account for the translation of speech acts.

Tagushi (2006) investigated the requestive performance of Japanese learners of English in role plays as regards appropriateness and linguistic expressions. The findings suggested that although the high-proficient had better control of linguistic items than the low-proficient, enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge was more helpful. Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) investigated the requestive act modification in the performance of advanced ESL learners, most of whom were Greek. The learners seemed to overuse zero-marking (absence of internal mitigators) due to the difficulty in using these modifiers. Additionally, the authors related the underuse of consultative devices to L1 influence as Greek is a culture that values solidarity, informality, and in-group relations. Grounders were the most used external mitigator as they are acquired early and do not require idiomatic forms. It was also reported that IL-users overused preparators and imposition minimizers. The overuse is an indicator of a lack of confidence which stems from lack of LP and the underuse is an L1-driven, since Greek is a positive-politeness culture that encourages spontaneity and involvement, unlike the British one. IL-users opted for S-perspective due to the preponderance of certain HA strategies, namely query preparatories.

So far as the studies that examined IL requests of learners from Arabic-L1 background, Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009) gave special attention to the politeness strategies in IL requests performed by Yemeni EFL learners. Learners favored query preparatory realized oftentimes by the modals *can* and *could* along with mood derivable and *want* statements. The overuse of *can* and *could* was seen as an outcome of L1-influence because Arabic does not pragmatically differentiate between the present and past forms of modal verbs. The employment of direct forms, with or without softeners, was interpreted as a transfer from L1 too, given solidarity and closeness between interlocutors. Moreover, this was related to the fact that Arabic employs formulae that resemble please and excuse me in conjunction with bare imperatives (e.g. Allah yerrda aleik/May God be pleased with you) which are usable to any kind of addressee. In their study of mitigating devices in English requests performed by Jordanian learners, Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) indicated that three main factors influenced IL performance: language ability, L2 pragmatic knowledge, and L1 transfer. For pragmatic transfer, it was evidenced at the pragmalinguistic level in over-initiating the request by expressions like *excuse me* (from Arabic afwan) and *hello* (from Arabic marhaba). Jordanians also transferred certain cultural assumptions in expressions of gratitude, well-wishing, obligation etc. which are typical to the Arab culture.

Taguchi (2013) examined the effects of individual difference (ID) factors on changing pragmatic abilities among L2 learners of English. Participants were 48 Japanese EFL students in an English-medium university in Japan. They completed a pragmatic speaking test (k = 12) that assessed their ability to produce two speech acts: requests and opinions, in high- and low-imposition situations. The measure was given three times during one academic year. Speech acts were evaluated for appropriateness and fluency. Three ID factors (proficiency, orientation

towards English study, and lexical access skill) were measured, and their effects on changes in appropriateness and fluency of speech act production were assessed. Results revealed significant effects of individual factors on pragmatic change, but the effects appeared differently between appropriateness (pragmalingusitic) and fluency (sociopragmatic). The study was computer based and the participants were asked to read situational scenario and respond as if they were in a real situation and performing the role. They had two practice items. Each item started with a situational scenario on the computer screen. They were allowed to take as much time to read the scenario and prepare for the speech act. When they were ready, they clicked on the "continue" button. Planning time was measured between the moment when the situational scenario appeared on the computer screen until the moment when the participants clicked on the "continue" button. Once they clicked the button, the scenario disappeared and the message "start speaking" appeared on the screen. After they finished the item, they moved on to the next item. The computer recorded their speech and moved on to the next item. Results indicated that the faster the lexical access became, the faster the speech rate became, regardless of the situation type, so the pragmalinguistic knowledge was more helpful.

Dendenne (2014) attempted to investigate pragmatic transfer in interlanguage requests performed by Algerian EFL learners. The data of the study were gathered by means of a three-item Discourse Completion Task. The task was administered to two controlling groups of native speakers: Arabic and English and two learner groups at two proficiency levels: low and high. The responses were coded and then analyzed by counting the frequency of request strategies and exploring their wording at levels of head acts, request perspective and modification. The findings showed that the performance in Arabic and English exhibited two types of differing politeness systems: positive-face-based and negative-face-based respectively. In learners' production, both types of pragmatic transfer were evident. The pragmalinguistic type was operative in the employment of linguistic structures inspired by the mother language and word by word translation. The sociopragmatic type was extant in the employment of the request strategies and the perception of the situational variables that were in line with the learners' mother language. In addition to transfer, interlanguage production was affected by lack of pragmatic knowledge, interlanguage-specific features, and language constraints. The factor of language proficiency did not give marked advantage to the high-proficient learners over the low-proficient.

The studies cited above showed that the use of corpora can be rewarding in the teaching and learning of the speech act of request. Despite the important role that textbooks and other instructional materials play in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Iran, there is still limited research conducted on corpus-based materials and approaches. The present study thus tried to investigate the effects of corpus-based instruction of colligations on learning the speech act of request by Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

Methodology
Participants

The participants in this study were randomly selected from a target population of EFL learners studying English in several language institutes in Mazandaran Province, Iran. After administrating OPT and selecting scores between 120 -149, the researchers assigned them into two groups of experimental and control groups, 30 learners each. The participants were of both genders and ranged in age from ١٩ to 28. A multiple discourse completion test was administered to the two groups as the pretest. Then the experimental groups were exposed to treatment, which was corpus-based instruction of speech acts of request, while the control groups did not receive corpus-based instruction, but was taught through traditional teaching methods of speech acts.

After a 15-session semester, a posttest was administered. The results of the post tests were analyzed to see whether or not treatment had any significant impacts on the learners' knowledge of the investigated speech act.

Materials

The materials in the present study were of two types: those used in traditional classes and the ones used in corpus-based classes:

In traditional classes, the students had several sources of authentic materials to observe and analyze speech act samples. They listened to audios, watched filmed scenes and reviewed their transcripts for the speech act of request studied during the semester. The class also studied EFL textbooks taught in these institutes about American culture and communication in order to understand the cultural context that shapes how speech acts are performed. The approximate level of these textbooks, as defined by the publisher, was consistent among all eight books: intermediate to upper-intermediate.

In corpus-based classes, 1) In these groups a corpus like COMUNICATOR that is called dialogue corpora, with Date and Dipper as its concondarcers, were used. These corpora are speech act-special and contain topics concerning speech act practice. It is a keyword-based parser and seems to be adequate for this first stage of parsing task. The validity and reliability of this corpus had been substantiated through a pilot study done on 10 students to make sure if it is suitable for intermediate level students, 2) CARLA site was also used as a source for exercises and practicing speech acts. This database contains bibliographic information for all publications and presentations that have come out of the projects at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. This work has been created by an interdisciplinary and intercollegiate working group of faculty from the University of Minnesota in the fields of second language acquisition, second language pedagogy, and other disciplines dealing with linguistic issues. This website offers information about speech acts and how they can be learned and taught. (www.iles.umn.edu/introspeechacts).

Instruments

Several instruments were employed in the present study:

1. As for the proficiency test, the second version of OPT (Allen, 1992) test was employed. The test has been developed by the Languages and Linguistic Faculty members in Oxford University and therefore, enjoys the construct validity crucial to any developed test.

2. Krejcie and Morgan's table for random sample size (1970): This table is effective for determining sample based on the design of the study with 95% confidence interval.

3. Two 20-item multiple discourse completion test (MDCT) for the case of containing request situations developed by Ishihara and Cohen (2010): one was used as the pretest and the other as the posttest. The reliability and validity of these tests were confirmed beforehand by the developers; all of these situations were adapted from the previous studies. The tests were scored based on Blum and Kulkas' coding scheme (1997) for request T. Two criteria were used here for coding the speech act of request through colligation: Conveying the illocutionary force and grammatical go-togetherness of speech act elements. It is called Mood derivable where the grammatical mood of locution and its colligation determine its illocutionary force.

4. Taggers such as CLAWS (linguistics) and VOLSUNGA were also introduced because part of speech analysis was needed for colligational instruction. Also CLL-Tagger which allowed the user getting a text annotated with POS (part of speech) tags was used. It works on a well-known bi-directional inference algorithm according to which a POS tag is assigned to a token

depending on POS tags of tokens to the right and to the left of current token. As a result CLL-Tagger works much faster than its immediate analogue, a tagger developed by the Japanese scientists (T&T tagger) that employs the same algorithm and also American National Corpus (ANC).

5. As alternatives to DATE and DIPPER Scheme for COMUNICATOR corpus, there are two commercially available software programs, such as Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1999) and Monoconc Pro (2000), which any average home computer user can manipulate with relative ease. They were also suggested and used for additional practice.

6. In addition, devices like computers and internes, videos, audios containing situations, interviews and meetings with celebrities were employed for the instruction.

Procedures

The subjects were selected from the target population of intermediate EFL learners. An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered with 200 questions, fifty for each skill and 60 participants with scores between 120 to 149 were selected for the purpose of this study and randomly assigned into two groups (i.e. experimental and control groups). A pretest of MDTC was administered to determine their primary knowledge of speech act of request. Then the treatment started and lasted for one semester of 15 sessions, twice a week. Each treatment session lasted an hour and a half. The key points were related to speech act of request and how it is intimately tied to the cultural context in which they are used. The researchers started with pre-presentation warming up, presentation explicit-metapragmatic instruction, teacher-fronted discussion of various meanings conveyed by an utterance, presenting socio-cultural contexts, linguistic knowledge, semantic and syntactic, formula and strategies that were needed to realize the intended speech act in both groups. In experimental groups, colligation was introduced and practiced. The type of material was also different. Teaching resources were authentic language materials, videos, textbooks for control group and corpora for experimental group. The subjects were given awareness activities, authentic language samples as examples or models, and production activities.

The control group learners practiced the speech act of request through traditional methods of teaching by using speech act related materials extracted by the researchers from EFL textbooks, audios, and videos. The experimental group used corpora as the instructional material. They were exposed to dialogues and different examples containing different forms of requesting in various real life situations from dialogue corpora. The explicit corpus-based investigation for enhancing pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request was through colligation. The researcher explained what colligation is and some examples were shown through corpora. Taggers and concodancers were introduced. The subjects became familiar with their application and use. These applications were installed by the researcher beforehand. As an alternative, the way online corpora could be downloaded and practiced was also taught. The subjects were asked to find some examples of this speech act and the co-occurrence of words with particular grammatical categories (Hoey, 2000). Dialogue corpora are keyword-based. The key words were given, and the speech act used in different situation appeared on the screen. Then taggers analyzed them into grammatical categories. The subjects observed how, in frequent example, a special word can co-occur with a certain grammatical category. Dialogue corpora also exist online. The subjects could download and use them in this way. In the present study, these types of corpora were used when the subjects became proficient enough in determining part-of-speech later. After enough practicing through corpora, the students started working on the speech act of request through role play because it is an integrated skill and all skills are practiced through it.

Then some exercises taken from CARLA website were given to the subjects to see whether or not they were able to use and write different forms of requesting lexically and grammatically correct. The subjects were required to do the exercises for more practice. By the end of the semester a posttest of MDCT was administered with questions specified to the speech act of request to see whether or not there would be any difference between traditional and corpus group. Then, data were analyzed and codified based on the cross-cultural speech act realization pattern, (CCSARP; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), the move derivable one, in which they identified some patterns utilized in requesting in English contexts. In order to increase the validity of result, field notes that were based on observations and interview were also used.

Results

The main purpose of the current research paper was to provide a better understanding of how using corpora could help improve pragmalinguistics knowledge of speech act of request among intermediate level EFL learners. Based on the literature review on pragmatics and corpus-based language learning, as well as the proposed methodology, the formulated research question was: Do colligational on-line corpora have any significant effects on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners? This question was also expressed in term of the following null hypothesis: Colligational on-line corpora have no significant effects on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

The participants' scores, both on the pretest and posttest, were analyzed by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics as two types of data analysis statistical procedures were used in this study. As an inferential statistical procedure, paired-samples t test was used to see the participants' possible improvement from pretests to posttests. Independent-samples t test using participants' scores in posttest was used in order to find out any significant difference between participants' responses to the situations in posttests.

Table 1. *Descriptive analysis of the pretest and posttest scores of the control group*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	12.31	30	3.07	.56
Posttest	12.18	30	3.16	.57

Table1 presents the descriptive analysis of pretest and posttest scores of the control group of request with the mean of 12.31, standard deviation of 3.07 for the pretest and mean of 12.18 and standard deviation of 3.16 for the posttest. As the table shows, there is a very small difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the control groupers.

Table 2. *Descriptive analysis of the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	12.18	30	3.13	.57
Posttest	14.23	30	3.13	.57

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of pretest and post test scores of experimental group. The mean is 12.18 and the standard deviation is 3.13 for the pretest and 14.23 for the posttest. The difference between pretest and posttest is evident here. So it shows the treatment was effective.

Table 3. *Paired sample t test between pretest and posttest scores of control group*

				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
.13	.75	.13	-.14	.41	.96	29	.07

Table 3 shows the results of paired-samples *t* test between pretest and posttest scores of control group. The observed *t* is .96 with the significance level of .07. It is less than the significance level (2.00), so the difference between pretest and posttest is not significant for the control group.

Table 4. *Paired sample t test between pretest and posttest scores of experimental group*

			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
2.05	.62	.11	2.28	1.81	8.08	29	.00

Table 4 shows the results of paired-samples *t* test between pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group, which received colligational corpus-based instruction. The observed *t* is 8.08 exceeding the critical *t* with the significance level of .00 that is less than .05. It shows the existence of a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental groupers, and thus the effectiveness of treatment in experimental group.

Table 5. *Group Statistics between post test scores of experimental and control groups*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control Group	30	12.18	3.16	.57
Experimental Group	30	14.23	3.13	.57

Table 5 shows that the mean score of the experimental group (14.23) was higher than that of the control group (12.18) on the posttest. To find out whether this difference between the two mean scores was statistically significant or not, an independent-samples *t* test was conducted:

Table 6. *Independent Samples t test between posttest scores of colligation of request between experimental and control group*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	.61	.43	2.66	58	.01	2.43	.85	-3.15	.28

Table 6 summarizes an independent-samples *t* test to compare the posttest scores of experimental and control group. The observed *t* is 2.66 and greater than the critical *t* which is 2.00. The *p* value (two- tailed) is .01. Hence, the difference between the posttest scores of the control and experimental groups was statistically significant, and thus the treatment was influential in experimental group.

Considering the research question, the findings of the paired-samples *t* test of the participants' pretest and posttest scores and independent-samples *t* test between the posttest scores of experimental and control groups indicated that the participants in the experimental group improved significantly in their speech act ability through using corpora. Thus, the null hypothesis that colligationall corpus-based instruction had no significant effects on enhancing the speech act knowledge of subjects of this study was repudiated.

Discussion

The present study confirmed the effectiveness of using colligational corpus-based instruction in enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request. Although some researchers believe in the role of other factors, like Ghanami (2014) who focused on the role of gender differences, or Birjandi and Karimi (2014) who emphasized on the importance of language proficiency, the findings of this study are consistent with studies done by Bardovi-Harling, Mossman, and Vellenga (2015) who offered corpora for developing materials to teach speech acts. They believed corpora can provide exposure, authenticity, and awareness of the appropriateness of some expressions in certain contexts. In addition, colligational corpus-based instruction, focusing on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of learners, can be used in pragmatic field in general and speech act related studies in more specific ways and thus lead to better understanding of the problems concerning speech act learning, especially requesting problems. Polcz (2012) did a colligational corpus-based study on conventionally indirect speech acts of suggestion and request in English–Hungarian film scripts by focusing on misunderstandings in translation of these acts. Corpora provided frequency for the specified acts. These two pragmalinguistic forms were structurally analyzed through sentences by using corpora and concordancing. The result showed that both direct and indirect transfer took place in the

process of translation of speech acts and the structure of both languages were found in the translation of these two acts. The findings also highly support the study conducted by Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009), who followed a colligational approach by giving special attention to the politeness strategies in IL requests performed by Yemeni EFL learners for the modals *can*, *could* and *want* statements. The overuse of *can* and *could* was seen as an outcome of L1-influence because Arabic does not pragmatically differentiate between the present and past forms of modal verbs and the fact that Arabic employs formulae that resemble *please* and *excuse me* in conjunction with bare imperatives (e.g. Allah yerrda aleik/May God be pleased with you) which are usable to any kind of addressee. Corpora as a source of authentic materials helped to reach to such a finding.

The findings of the present study were also consistent with Taguchi' findings (2013) who examined the effects of individual difference (ID) factors on changing pragmatic abilities among L2 learners of English among 48 Japanese EFL students in an English-medium university in Japan. The participants practiced speech acts both sociopragmatically and pragmalinguisticly. They completed a pragmatic speaking test (k = 12) that assessed their ability to produce two speech acts: requests and opinions, in high- and low-imposition situations. Results revealed that although individual factors were important on pragmatic changes, the effects were mostly because of enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of participants as they appeared differently between appropriateness (pragmalingusitic) and fluency (sociopragmatic). The faster they lexical and grammatical analysis, the faster the speech act using rate became, regardless of the situation type, and the pragmalinguistic knowledge was more helpful. The results of observation and interview were also rewarding for the use of corpora and the experimental groups were more satisfied with using this teaching method.

Conclusion

This paper presented the effective results of using colligational corpus-based instruction in enhancing pragmalinguistics knowledge of speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The findings indicated that there was a significant difference between the corpus-based instruction and traditional teaching methods of speech acts in terms of teaching methodology and instructional material as measured by posttests. It also proved the fact that colligation as a corpus-based teaching approach, could enhance the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request and, as a result, better learning of this speech act. The implication and pedagogical value that a corpus brings is the context it provides via authentic examples. A corpus-based approach gives authentic examples by providing students opportunities to be explorers (Dodd, 1997). With authentic examples, learners will see the true use of language. Flowerdew (1993) cautions against using fabricated examples due to the possibility that students may see a distorted picture of actual use. Colligation can provide information concerning the part of speech and structure of a specific act. Learners can learn more than a single act with different forms and internalize them better through real-life examples. Although the current study has made findings in employing corpus-based language learning in an EFL setting, there are limitations to the research like small sample size, controlling of the subjects and confounding variables like age, sex, intelligence, and psychological factors that may affect the results of the study. The main limitations of this study is concerned with the implementation and use of computer technology resources and lack of computer-assisted language learning method in the classes in which only traditional ways are worked on. Based on the results and the limitations of the current research, suggestions can be made for future research to better understand the employing of a corpus-based research in speech act learning. First, since this study focused on

speech act of request, the question, then, might be whether the use of corpora in other speech acts can also be helpful. The second point is the emphasis of this study on the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts. It was found that corpus-based instruction and using colligation as a corpus-based and grammatical approach can improve the quality of learning by providing example from authentic contexts and lead to having a more meaningful and comprehensible product. The same study can be done by a sociopragmatic concentration. The third point is concerned with the subjects' level of study in which intermediate levels were chosen for the purpose of this study. A research can be done on advanced levels to see whether this approach is effective in this level or not. The same study can be replicated in other settings by other subjects of different ages, levels, sexes and the future researchers can extend this study in the field of psychology or other fields of studies. The final point is pragmatics itself, which is not confined to speech acts. Researchers can use corpus-based instructions in other areas of pragmatics like conversational implicature, deixes, and conversational structural studies with the same or different methodology to test its effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

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